
BACKGROUND

Useful taxonomy:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>transitives</th>
<th>intransitives</th>
<th>unergatives</th>
<th>unaccusatives</th>
<th>alternating</th>
<th>nonalternating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(swim, talk, smile)</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>(break, melt)</td>
<td>(exist, happen)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Attested examples of passivized unaccusatives in L2 English

"The most memorable experience of my life WAS HAPPENED 15 years ago"
"Most of people ARE FALLEN in love and marry somebody"
"My mother WAS DIED when I was just a baby"
"He WAS ARRIVED early"
"This problem IS EXISTED for many years"

Hypotheses

1) Transfer of a compound tense/aspect system from L1

Auxiliary selection for unaccusatives transferred from L1s that have it (Italian, French, Dutch, German)

Trois garçons SONT ARRIVE’S `a la gare
Tre ragazzi SONO ARRIVATI alla stazione
Drie jongens ZIJN op het station GEARRIVEERD
Drei Jungen SIND am Bahnhof ANGEKOMMEN

BUT also prevalent among L2 learners of English with Chinese, Japanese, and Korean as L1, where compound tense/aspect constructions like this don’t exist

So Asian learners also passivize verbs they would never passivize in L1

2) Overgeneralization of the English adjectival passive

Examples:

Verbal passive:

The apartment was (quickly) furnished before it was rented.

Adjectival passive:

When the tenants moved in, the apartment was (already/still) furnished.
They were looking for a furnished apartment.

Past participial adjectives are usually derived from both transitive and unaccusative change of state verbs

unaccusative participles used as prenominal adjectival modifiers:

elapsed time
a fallen leaf
the drifted snow
wilted lettuce
a collapsed lung
vanished civilizations

There is typically no ‘by’-phrase in L2 passivized unaccusatives, which increases the likelihood of these being adjectival passives in L2 English

However:

- there are no advanced L2 learner errors with past participles of unaccusative verbs used as prenominal adjectival modifiers

- passivized unaccusatives do not lend themselves well to stative readings, which one should expect to be the case in adjectival passives

"My mother was died when I was just a baby" does not mean
"My mother was dead when I was just a baby"

Also, why would L2 learners passivize stative unaccusative verbs to derive a stative adjectival reading?

cf. "This problem is existed for many years"
"The two might have been coexisted"

3) Passive unaccusative verbs are first made causative, then passivized

This account assumes that

- learners first make the verb causative (this happens in L1A)

well attested in L2 acquisition, e.g.

*The shortage of fuels occurred the need for economical engine.
*This construction will progress my country.

BUT

How often does such causativization occur relative to passivization of unaccusatives?

Do all the unaccusative verbs that get passivized lend themselves to causativization? What about stative verbs like ‘exist’ and achievement verbs like ‘arrive’?
and then passivize the newly formed causative (i.e. this is a true verbal passive, not an adjectival passive)

BUT

There is no evidence of an agent ‘by’-phrase in passivized unaccusatives

*The need for economical engine was occurred (by the shortage of fuels)
*My country will be progressed (by this construction)

If such sentences existed in L2 English, i.e. with an agent phrase, this would demonstrate that there was an agentive reading, i.e. an agent, i.e. a causer of the event in the construction

AND

Interpreting passivized unaccusatives as true verbal passives based on causative readings of unaccusative verbs again changes the presumed intended meaning:

"He was arrived early" does not mean
"He was made to arrive (dropped off) early"

"My mother was died when I was just a baby" does not mean
"My mother was killed when I was just a baby"

"This problem is existed for many years" does not mean
"This problem was made to exist (created) for many years"

4) Lack of an agentive subject leads to the use of an expletive subject

The lack of an agentive subject (true of both passives and unaccusatives) is equated with its morphological realization (the passive BE + EN)

Evidence for this would be a so-called "expletive" (‘there’ or ‘it’) in subject position of L2 passives with transitive verbs:

*It was nearly killed all of us.
*In the lake of Maracaibo was discovered the oil.

BUT does one find structures like this (i.e. with ‘there’ or ‘it’) with unaccusative verbs as well in L2 English?

5) Passive marks movement of patient objects to subject position

BE + EN is assumed by the L2 learner to be an overt marker of moving the object NP to the subject position, required of both passives and unaccusatives, e.g.

passivization of transitive verbs:

____ killed [my mother] PATIENT
[my mother] WAS killed (by cancer)
PATIENT

passivization of unaccusative verbs:

_____ died [my mother]
PATIENT

* [my mother] WAS died
PATIENT

METHODS

Data

Longman Learners Corpus (1993) - mostly written English produced by native speakers of other languages

Study included Italian, Spanish, Japanese, and Korean L2 learners of English (due to availability of relatively large sample size)

3362 essays analyzed:

684 Italian 1079 Spanish 1363 Japanese
236 Korean

Proficiency level was NOT included as a factor (!), nor was anything else except L1

Method

Only non-alternating unaccusatives were used

Ten unaccusative verbs that are commonly passivized in L2 English were pre-selected for analysis:

appear, arise, arrive, die, disappear, exist, fall, happen, occur, rise

Ten unergative verbs used as controls:

cough, cry, dance, joke, laugh, shout, smile, speak, talk, walk

Ten structural patterns searched for:

Three boys arrived.
Three boys were arrived.
There arrived three boys.
It arrived three boys.
Arrived three boys.
There was/were arrived three boys.
It was/were arrived three boys.
Was/were arrived three boys.
The bus arrived three boys.
There was/were three boys arrived.

Exclusions:

a) raising verbs: appear to be, happen to be, etc.
   take a propositional rather than a nominal complement
b) idioms and metaphorical usage: fall in love, fall ill
   often occur repeatedly, could skew analysis
c) nonfinite verbs: infinitives, gerunds, participles
   impossible to detect syntactic position of a covert argument

RESULTS

941 unaccusative tokens gathered 240 Italian 347 Spanish 304 Japanese
50 Korean

Passivization most common error: Three boys were arrived.

640 unergative tokens gathered; only one passive unaccusative found in a
Spanish L2 learner of English:

*He has been walked since last month.

DISCUSSION

Evidence for/against hypotheses:

1) Transfer of a compound tense/aspect system from L1 (cf. Figure 1, p. 311)

Prevalent among L2 learners of English with Chinese, Japanese, and Korean
as L1, where compound tense/aspect constructions like this don’t exist”
************************************************************************
Korean and Japanese L2 learners of English:
more passivization errors than all other types of errors together

Italian and Spanish L2 learners of English:
fewer passivization errors than all other types of errors together

So Asian L2 learners make proportionately more passive errors than other
types of errors, and this cannot be due to L1 transfer

Romance speakers learning L2 make more errors of the type

It arrived three boys.
Arrived three boys.
than Asian speakers; this IS presumably an instance of L1 transfer

Il est arrive’ trois garcons.
it is arrived three boys

Sono arrivati tre ragazzi.
are arrived three boys

2) Overgeneralization of the English adjectival passive

passivized unaccusatives do not lend themselves well to stative readings, which one should expect to be the case in adjectival passives

Passive errors in the corpus have a process rather than a stative reading:

"...they were happened a few days ago...."
"...terrorism is happened very often..."
"...suddenly pale face was appeared out of the window..."
"Two or three days ago, the important trouble was happened."

Why would L2 learners passivize stative unaccusative verbs to derive a stative adjectival reading?

"...this kind of problem will be exist forever..."

3) Passive unaccusative verbs are first made causative, then passivized

This account assumes that learners first make the verb causative

"I rose my hand"
"...engine that don’t happen environmental pollution..."
"...he falls a piece of note into dough by mistake"
"...concentrated population could occur these kind of problem"
"...[Congress] may die out the ban on women in the battle"

How often does such causativization occur relative to passivization of unaccusatives?

11 tokens to 38

Italian: 2 to 8
Spanish: 1 to 5
Korean: 1 to 8
Japanese: 7 to 17

If causativization is at work in passive unaccusatives, there should be an agentive reading available for the sentence in a ‘by’-phrase,
i.e. an agent, i.e. a causer of the event in the construction
*************************************************************************
Only one example of this in entire corpus:

"It [a wall] was falled down in order to get a bigger green house"

Otherwise you get:

"...the word, ‘the role of women’, is appeared just several years ago"
"...to find out what would be happened in the next stories..."
"He is also appeared on the list of investigations of gold smuggling"

where there is no plausible agent/causer of the event, or

"I was nearly arrived to my office..."
"You are arrived in the eternity city"
"After that we were arrive at the station"

where the agent/causer is the subject of the sentence

4) Lack of an agentive subject leads to the use of an expletive subject

Evidence for this would be a so-called "expletive" (‘there’ or ‘it’) in subject position of L2 passives with unaccusative verbs
*************************************************************************

Four such tokens in the corpus, all produced by Japanese

"If is continued smoking there are appear some bad diseases..."
"After the war, there were appeared a lot of women..."

Otherwise, there were lots of non-passive uses of unaccusative verbs with expletive ‘there’,

"...there exist two kinds of jobs"
"...there exist many kind of prejudice"
"...there often arise the problem of political indifference"

and expletive ‘it’ by Italian and Spanish L2 learners

"...it existed a lot of restrictions"
"...it happened a tragic event"
"...it arrived the day of his departure"
"...it will happen something exciting"

5) Passive marks movement of patient objects to subject position

BE + EN is assumed by the L2 learner to be an overt marker of moving the object NP to the subject position, required of both passives and unaccusatives
*************************************************************************

90% of the time, the patient noun phrase is in subject position as predicted,
rather than in postverbal position, as predicted by hypothesis (4)

Conclusion: unaccusative verbs are being passivized on analogy to passivization of transitive verbs

passivization of transitive verbs:

____ killed [my mother]

PATIENT

[my mother] WAS killed (by cancer)

PATIENT

passivization of unaccusative verbs:

____ died [my mother]

PATIENT

In other words, L2 learners of English are trying to treat unaccusative verbs in a manner that seems more systematic to them:

ALL patient subjects take passive morphology on the verb

This means that L2 learners show evidence of somehow recognizing that the subjects of unaccusative verbs are patients rather than agents

Oshita claims in the introduction (and elsewhere) that this phenomenon occurs ONLY with high intermediate to advanced L2 learners of English

So is this a U-shaped learning function like that seen in L1A of irregular morphology?

Do beginning L2 learners not make passive errors with unaccusatives? Do near-native speakers stop making passive errors with unaccusative?